

shape in the pawns should not be hung forth, but set over the fronts of each shop.

Mr. Tite then entered on the last division of his discourse, that there was a period of much more remote antiquity, by hundreds upon hundreds of years, than the time of the oldest Exchange; and that it was of the relics of that period, then exhibited to the meeting, of which he was about to speak. In doing this, he was conscious of shewing his junior professional brethren "how to observe," when such antiquities came before them in the discharge of their duties. He first gave an account of the place and manner of their discovery, which will be found in his own report addressed to the joint committee, and which we here introduce:—

To the Joint Grand Committee for Gresham Affairs.

"GENTLEMEN,—In continuation of my reports on the works at the New Royal Exchange, I beg to make the following statement:—

In proceeding with the excavation of the merchant's area, I found the soil much more disturbed than had previously been the case; and that in this small square space there were no fewer than thirty-two cesspools, some of them of considerable size. These have all been carefully cleared out down to the solid ground, and filled up with concrete. In consequence of this circumstance, however, and the unsatisfactory state of the ground generally, I have considered it prudent to have this area excavated to the same level as the other parts of the foundation, and to put in the stratum of concrete of the same uniform thickness. In proceeding westward with the excavation a circumstance of considerable interest in an antiquarian point of view has been discovered; but unfortunately it has led to some delay and expense, and therefore I must beg to explain the nature of this interruption.

It will be in the recollection of the committee that the result of the trials suggested by the last year shewed, that a firm bed of gravel might uniformly be expected at a depth of 16 ft. 6 in. below the present surface of the ground, all above that level being vegetable earth, accumulations and debris of various kinds. This was ascertained by the sinking of six pits in various parts of the site of the Old Exchange. Except in the cesspools referred to, this conclusion has been found correct in all excavations up to the beginning of April. At that time the workmen began to destroy the foundations of the west wall of the merchants' area of the Old Exchange, when it was found that this wall was placed partly on some remains of Roman building, evidently undisturbed, and these remains apparently rested on the native gravel. The Roman work was a wall and a sort of pedestal, which crossed the ground obliquely from the south-west to the north-east, the pedestal being stuccoed and moulded, and having the mouldings painted with an ornament. Where the Roman work ceased to afford a foundation for the walls of the Exchange, oak piles had been driven in and sleepers laid on the heads of those piles. The substratum, however, in this latter case, was a black mud; and upon proceeding further, it was found that the Roman work itself, as well as the wall, had been founded on a very large pit, pond, irregular in its shape, but about 50 ft. in length from north to south, 34 ft. from east to west, and 13 ft. in depth below the bottom of the concrete, being in fact sunk through the gravel right down to the clay. This pit was filled with hardened mud, in which were immense quantities of bones of sheep, much broken, with a few of the bones and horns of stags, very numerous fragments of the red Roman pottery, commonly called Samian ware, pieces of glass and glass vessels, broken lamps, and all the usual rubbish that might accumulate in a pond left to fill up in a course of years. Amidst this mass about fifteen copper coins have also been found; two of them of the emperor Vespasian, the remainder of the emperor Domitian, besides several copper, iron, and wooden styles, used for writing on waxen tablets, together with one or two of the tablets themselves, one of which is perfect. The most uncommon and perhaps most interesting remains is a strigil used in the Roman baths. This is of mixed metal, and in good preservation, and is certainly very curious. All antiquities found are reserved, under the terms of the con-

tract, for the committee, whose property they are.

It is extremely difficult to explain this state of things; but it appears to me probable, that this pit had been sunk during the earliest times of the Roman occupation of London, for the mere purpose of obtaining the gravel, required perhaps for making a causeway or road across the banks of the adjoining marshy stream of the Wall-Brook. When the excavation had served this purpose, it remained for years (perhaps centuries), forming a dirty pond to receive the refuse and rubbish of all the neighbourhood, and in this way it must have been gradually filled up; at the time of building the Roman wall the accumulation was firm enough again to receive a bed of gravel, slightly concreted, laid on the top of the mud, so as to be covered up and become apparently solid ground. The builders of the Old Exchange, however, found out its deficiency, and supported their work on piles, which had evidently yielded.

This hole is cleared out to the extent of four-fifths of its area, and the concrete is being fast extended towards this spot.

In this state of things it would be obviously most injudicious to carry up the foundations, on the part already concreted, to any great extent, I have therefore directed the bricklayers to proceed with the footing-courses only of that part of the foundation; and when the concreting is completed, it will be perfectly easy to press forward the brickwork so as to be quite in time for the second contract.—I have the honour to be, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

(Signed) WILLIAM TITE.
17, St. Helen's-place, 3rd May, 1841.

Of the antiquities thus referred to, Mr. Tite noticed first the Samian ware, of which several fine fragments, embossed with elegant figures, and some marked with the names of the potters, were before him. He illustrated the general employment and estimation of the manufacture at different periods, from a variety of classical authors; and noticed the interview between Homer and the potters of Samos, referring to the very rare black cups which they made. At this time, also, was exhibited a large and fine fragment of an amphora, brought from a depth of 17 feet below the surface; and several curious terra-cotta lamps.

Mr. Tite then referred to the several specimens of pine wood table-books, and styles of different metals, which were on the table, and shewed the manner of writing with them. These he also illustrated from a variety of ancient authors, shewing their use and estimation: as, how Quintilian commends waxen tablets to the student, for expedition; how Homer shews, from his own example, that they might be employed for writing by the blind; how the "vertebre styli," the "filing" of a composition, and the "ploughing of the waxen field," passed into proverbial sayings; how such tablets were employed for letters; and he finished with the curious description of the knavery of the mendicant friar, with his

"Pair of tables, all of ivory,
And a pointed polished tawny."

from "the Somnour's Tale" of Chaucer.

A few illustrative remarks followed, concerning the remains of reticulated sandals, soldiers' shoes, and other articles of leather, contained in another case, as also of a Roman strigil, and several miscellaneous antiquities; but these were only slightly noticed, on account of the lateness of the hour. Mr. Tite concluded by observing that his design, in this part of his lecture, was to induce his young friends to regard each ancient remains with an intelligent mind and eye; not simply for the sake of their antiquity, but because some hidden beauty, some principle of early art, some excellent moral, or some noble sentiment, might be elicited by the examination.

A LANDSLIP on the Newcastle and Darlington line, has interrupted all communication for the present. It occurred about a mile-and-a-half to the northward of Aycliffe. The *Durham Chronicle*, says: "In traversing Mordon Carr, the line passes over a dead level, which, whenever there is much rain, covers the rails. To remedy this defect, the line through this marsh has been raised; and it is conjectured that the additional weight was the cause of this accident, which has left a chasm on the very line which the railway traversed."

REPORT FROM THE INSTITUTE OF THE FINE ARTS ON PUBLIC COMPETITIONS.

The following report of a committee, appointed to consider the subject of public competitions in matters of art, especially as regards the advertised proposal for a competition picture of the Baptism of Christ by immersion in the river Jordan, for a prize of 1,000*l.*, having been approved by the council, was read at a general meeting of that society, on the 27th ult., in the great room of the Society of Arts, Adelphi. Dr. Leonard Stewart in the chair.*

"Gentlemen,—Competitions in art are now so frequent and so fully responded to that, without sound principles in their management, they must necessarily be very injurious to the artists, however advantageous they may appear to the public; for instance, in the case before us, if 1,000*l.* has to be competed for, and fifty artists enter the lists and spend 1,800*l.* of money and an amount of time equal to twenty-nine years of human life, as this inquiry will demonstrate, they evidently lose 1,800*l.* and the whole of that time, unless there is compensation by reputation, by acquired knowledge which may be turned to account, in the sale of the competition pictures. A wholesome condition of public taste, good sense in the arrangements, and strict justice in the awards at competitions, would, in some measure, afford this compensation, but the usual modes adopted in these trials of skill afford none; on the contrary, they are attended with many circumstances that embitter the feelings, aggravate the sufferings, and injure the reputation of enthusiastic competitors. Such a course must ultimately be injurious to the public as well as to the artist. The system has indeed much of the excitement and immoral tendencies of a lottery.

In order to arrive at a better principle, we have inquired into the results of various competitions in different ages, and in several countries; we have endeavoured to trace the amount of competency in the judges and of equity in the modes of arrangement, or of good faith in the superintending authorities. Among the ancient Greeks various plans were adopted, according to the more or less popular political institutions of the community. Where the arts flourished most, public opinion, in whatever form expressed, was the basis of public patronage. In some cases the community, considering the competing artists most interested in a fair decision, actually left that decision to them; in others the opinion of the people was paramount; but even then suggestions from the artists were attended to with deference and respect, and not disregarded or condemned as is too often done among us. When Phidias and Alcamenes competed for a statue to be placed on a column or other elevated situation, at first sight all opinions were in favour of Alcamenes, but Phidias demanded that both figures should be placed at the intended elevation, previous to the award being made. This was done, and such was the consideration of perspective effect by the one artist and its neglect by the other, that the people no sooner saw them at their required elevation, than they changed their opinion, and decided in favour of Phidias. In this instance it is clear that the judges, i. e. the public, were not fully competent to their task, but it is also obvious that such artists as Alcamenes would have been equally unfit or even worse; for, in all probability, relying on their practice and skill, they would not have taken the trouble to raise the competing statues to the proposed elevation, and in all likelihood they would have been more tenacious of a first opinion than the people were.

In the case of the citizens of Cos choosing a statue of Venus from two by Praxiteles, so far from delegating their judgment to artists, they selected, from a motive of delicacy, that which the technical connoisseurs denounced as inferior. Posterity has decreed that in this, good sense triumphed over conventional excellence.

Much has been said of a mode of deciding some competitions among artists in ancient Greece, in which the competitors were each

* We shall seek an early opportunity to draw attention to the constitution of the Institute of Fine Arts, the present position, and that which it may and ought to take. It will be the fault of its management alone, if it do not become one of the most useful and important associations in England. A comprehensive and liberal spirit must prevail.